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FOR SECRETARY CLINTON AND PLEASE PASS TO NSA JONES

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [FR](#) [AF](#) [GM](#)

SUBJECT: SRAP HOLBROOKE CONSULTATIONS WITH DIPLOMATIC
ADVISOR LEVITTE ON IMPROVING COORDINATION ON AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke for reasons 1.4(b) and
(d).

¶1. (C) Summary. During a visit to Paris on November 13, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) Richard Holbrooke consulted with Jean-David Levitte, Diplomatic Advisor to President Sarkozy, on proposals to improve the coordination of the SRAP collective and to improve overall coordination of civilian efforts in Afghanistan. Holbrooke briefed on recent meetings with German officials in which they agreed that Germany would remain the official coordinator of the international SRAP group, but supported creation of an international cell within the State Department to be the secretariat for the SRAP collective. Holbrooke said he had earlier briefed FM Kouchner on this idea, who approved. Holbrooke went on to discuss the need for a strong civilian counterpart to General McChrystal to coordinate civilian assistance and policy in Afghanistan. He outlined three possible options including: (1) creating a High Representative position; (2) strengthening the existing UNAMA office; and (3) dual-hatting the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan to take over coordination responsibilities, which is the preferred USG option. Levitte noted that for the French, the UN remains the most natural coordinator as its mandate includes all economic actors and not just allies. Levitte stated that it would be "difficult" to place the U.S. Ambassador above the UN and other nations. He suggested strengthening UNAMA by replacing current UN Special Representative Kai Eide with a stonger, more effective leader when his current mandate expires in March. Finally, Levitte noted that the French position is not yet fixed, as this issue has not been raised to President Sarkozy for a decision. End Summary.

IMPROVING COORDINATION OF SRAP GROUP

¶2. (C) SRAP Holbrooke opened by expressing his desire to follow up on recent discussions between Levitte and NSA General Jones on improving coordination efforts in Afghanistan. The first task is to improve coordination of the SRAP international group, which now has about 27 members. He noted that under the previous German coalition government, coordination problems had arisen due to differing views between the German MFA and Chancellery. Holbrooke reported that in discussions yesterday in Berlin, the Germans had proposed remaining as the official SRAP coordinator, but supported the creation of an international cell within the State Department to function as the secretariat. This cell would be staffed by diplomats from other countries including: UK, Germany, France, and possibly Japan. Holbrooke said that

the Germans wanted to remain the official head so as not to "over-Americanize" the effort. He observed the benefit of having representatives of the Quad countries seconded to the State Department would allow for coordination within a smaller contact group rather than doing everything in a large group format. Holbrooke told Levitte that FM Kouchner had already approved this idea and would send a French diplomat to join the SRAP staff.

CREATION OF A CIVILIAN COORDINATOR

13. (C) Holbrooke then raised the more complex issue of the U.S. proposal to create a civilian counterpart to COMISAF General McChrystal in Afghanistan. Both General McChrystal and the USG strongly believe in the need for such a position.

Holbrooke raised three possible options to address this need, noting that the U.S. prefers the third option. The first option would be to create a High Representative similar to the position filled by Paddy Ashdown in Bosnia. The difficulty with this option is that neither the UN, nor President Karzai is likely to agree to it, given the Ashdown fiasco. Second, the international community could strengthen UNAMA and make it a real coordinator of civilian efforts. However, the UN would still be hobbled by its own bureaucracy and institutional system, which impacts the U.S. as the major civilian donor. Finally, the preferred option for the USG is to simply dual-hat the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan and have him assume overall civilian coordination responsibilities, with a small, separate international staff.

14. (C) Levitte responded that he had reacted negatively when this suggestion was first raised in a conversation with General Jones. He conceded that the proposals had various pros and cons, but worried that the third option would increase the perception that "this is a U.S. war." Levitte agreed that better coordination was necessary but stated that UNAMA already exists and "we can't just ignore it." UNAMA remains for France the most natural actor as it coordinates with all economic actors (including NGO's, etc), and is not limited to just the ISAF Allies. Further, he thought it would be difficult to put any Ambassador over the UN and asked whether instead we were open to replacing current UN Special Representative Kai Eide with a stronger, more effective leader when Eide's mandate runs out in March 2010. In response, Holbrooke inquired as to whether France knew any UN candidates strong enough to do the job, particularly in light of the fact that the UN has (temporarily) withdrawn two-thirds of its staff following the recent attacks on its compound. Levitte said that a strong character should come first, with nationality playing a secondary role. Levitte further suggested that an American fill the deputy position, to help coordinate the massive role played by the USG. Holbrooke noted that Kai Eide's contract would end in March 2010, so we should start discussing this now, in any case, with UN SYG Ban Ki Moon. Levitte agreed and added that whoever replaces Kai Eide should work closely with General McChrystal, urging daily meetings between the two. In the end, he stated that France did not yet have a fixed position on these proposals, as they had not yet been reported to President Sarkozy.

15. (U) This cable was reviewed and cleared by SRAP Richard Holbrooke.
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